

# ELKHORN WINTER YURT GUIDE

The Elkhorn yurt is conveniently located off the Elkhorn loop for use by Nordic skiers and snowshoers. This yurt is the most remote of all the department yurts. You have direct access to over 27 miles of groomed and 50 miles of marked ski trails. The 270° view to the south, east, and north is spectacular in the evening. From the yurt you can see Jackson Peak, Wolf Mountain, Steele Mountain, the Trinity range, Sunset Peak, and Pilot's Peak. The open, rolling terrain below the yurt provides off-trail skiers with a chance to polish their skills. The nearby ungroomed Cougar trail provides access to a prime intermediate/advanced telemark area. This secluded telemark area is about .5 miles away and has 500 feet slopes facing all directions. Snow is usually available for skiing from December 1 to April 15.

## **Difficulty:**

Intermediate to advanced. The difficulty of touring trails can increase in poor snow conditions and weather. The beginning of the route to Elkhorn yurt includes a long steep section and may require you to remove your skis and walk up. Later on, skiers can expect short, steep sections of trail that you will have to herringbone up. Climbing skins are recommended for those with heavy packs. Individuals should be thoroughly prepared and travel with someone who has been to the yurt and can readily find it. The Elkhorn loop trail is generally groomed on Thursday or Friday from December 1 to March 15. You should not count on the trail being groomed, but a freshly groomed trail will substantially reduce the amount of energy necessary to get to the yurt.

## **Where to Park:**

The Banner Ridge Park N' Ski parking lot is 23.5 miles north of Idaho City on Highway 21. An Idaho Park N' Ski permit is required to park in this plowed area. Please park your vehicles close together on the high end of the parking lot next to the highway. The Department of Transportation snow plow operators become frustrated when they cannot plow the lot because you are parked in the middle. You should also bring a shovel because you might have to dig your car out in case it gets plowed in. Do not park on Highway 21.

## **How to Get to the Yurt:**

The trails are marked with blue and yellow diamond shapes, called blazes, attached to trees. The recommended approach to the yurt is to take the Elkhorn loop trail clockwise to the yurt turnoff point. At the first intersection of the Elkhorn loop trail, just .2 miles from the parking lot, continue straight up the Elkhorn loop trail. This will take you past the Banner trail intersection and up onto the scenic Banner Ridge. Stay on the blue blazed Elkhorn loop until you get back into the trees. At 2.0 miles you will come to a sharp right 90° turn in the trail. Look for a large "Bear Crossing" sign at the Cougar trail intersection. This is the turn off for the Banner Ridge yurt. To go to the Elkhorn yurt, you should turn right and south on the Elkhorn loop trail. After about a ½ mile you will pass through an aspen grove. At 3.0 miles, you will be at the second Cougar trail intersection and at the base of a short steep climb. Stay on the Elkhorn loop trail and climb to the top of this small hill. At this point you should see a 4x4 wood post with yellow blazes and a large "Cougar Crossing" sign on it. Turn left and follow the yellow blazes generally south and east for 150 yards. Near the high point in this area you will find the Elkhorn yurt. If you arrive at the Alpine/Elkhorn trail's intersection, you have gone past the yurt turnoff.

## **Elevation Gain and Distance:**

About 800 feet rise over 3.0 miles (one-way). There are many steep sections.

**Water:**

The nearest creek water is about 1/3 mile away and is not easily accessible in the winter. Your best bet for water is to use the large pot provided to melt snow on the wood stove. We recommend boiling the water for 10 minutes before using.

**Wood Pile:**

Wood for the stove is located under the yurt entry deck. You may have to dig your way to the wood pile.

**Special Equipment Needed:**

Several members of the party should carry portable snow shovels.

**Avalanche and White-Out Hazard:**

Chances of an avalanche are low as long as Elkhorn loop trail is used. Avalanches can occur on nearby slopes. We do not recommend you travel to the yurt in high wind, heavy snow conditions, or at night because the trail section on Banner Ridge, which is a high, treeless, exposed ridge, can quickly develop white-out conditions.

**Maps Needed:**

Idaho City Area Yurt and Trail System, USFS Forest Road, and USGS 7.5 minute topographic, "Lowman".

**Global Positioning System Locations (UTM):**

Elkhorn Yurt	11 T 6132349 E
	4875235 N

Banner Ridge Parking Lot	11 T 611840 E
	4875230 N

**WARNING:**

**Winter travel and use of the yurt can be dangerous. Do not undertake yurt trips without careful preparation and a serious discussion of the dangers with ALL members of your group.**